

YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota, RAC Chairman

Meeting Minutes -- March 22, 2007

MSU-Billings College of Business – Room 163

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Dave Schwarz, Prairie CD; Kenny Nemitz, Dawson CD; Will Alexander, Carbon CD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD; John Moorhouse, RAC Chairman and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND, CD.

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, NRCS/TAC; Burt Williams, TNC/RAC; George Jordan, USFWP; Robert Lubbers, YRF; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Gay Easton, Yellowstone CD; Jim Robinson, DNRC/TAC; Boris Krizek, RAC; Greg Johnson, Kevin Adams, Curtis Miller and Randy Behm, COE; Liz Ching, Baucus Office; Susan Gilbertz, MSU-Billings; LaVerne Ivie, Yellowstone CD; Nicole McClain, YRCDC Coordinator; Kelly Gilbertson, Project Assistant, and Carol Watts, Custer CD Administrator.

Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:00am on Thursday, March 22, 2007. Introductions were made.

TAC update: See Warren Kellogg's attached notes. Warren Kellogg deferred to Boris Krizek, Environmental Engineer, City of Billings Public Works, who spoke about projects the city of Billings is involved with that could be incorporated into the Cumulative Effects Study. He offered to give a more detailed presentation at a future YRCDC meeting regarding Clean Water Act requirements. The Council Chairman agreed that a presentation was a good idea and would schedule it for a future meeting.

Greg Johnson, Army Corps of Engineers spoke on the ACOE's budget for the Yellowstone River CES. He said that because the President's budget has not been passed, they are operating under a continuing resolution and the budget would be the same as last year. The COE has a 2007 budget for 1.1 million but it could be cut back to \$200,000.00. Greg said it is possible that the full 1.1 million could be awarded.

Susan Gilbertz brought six notebooks containing the results of the 2006 Yellowstone River Cultural Inventory. These are final drafts and not yet available for release. There was a discussion about how the reports will be reproduced and distributed. Warren suggested that the reports should be posted on the web-site after they are approved by the Council. He also suggested that Susan contact those landowners to inform them that the report is complete. No decision was made at this time. Nicole, Susan, Greg Johnson, and Laurie Zeller will get estimates on printing 100 copies of each segment (about 130 pages each) plus 200 copies of the summary report. Susan is willing to meet with any of the conservation districts at their request. John Moorhouse commented that it was important to get the information out to the public.

George Jordan shared some thoughts on the Yellowstone River Clean-up project. He recently attended a conference in Nebraska that included a discussion on the group Missouri River Relief. He thought our group could take some direction from what this group had done as they have been doing a river clean up for the last seven years and have learned a lot in the way of logistics, liability and safety issues. George had flyers with him which included a web-site address Riverrelief.org. One idea he suggested was to carry GPS units so future cleanup areas could be noted. George also thought that FWP may be able to bring people in for the cleanup and he was willing to contact them about that. Bob Hector said he would make the contacts with the Missouri River group. Boris Krizek said he was the person to contact about using the landfill after the clean up.

Warren Kellogg provided an update about the avian study. He stated that in 2006 Danielle Jones and her crew visited 265 sites along the Yellowstone River. In total, access was gained through 15 public sites and with the cooperation of local landowners 65 private sites were visited. Over 90 avian species were documented. Danielle will begin the 2007 field work in mid-May by visiting those same sites plus add a few more. Private landowners will still need to be contacted, and Warren asked if Danielle could make those contacts or if the individual conservation districts wanted to. It was the decision of the Council that Danielle would make the contacts and keep the CDs informed. Danielle has written letters to the landowners informing them of the results of the bird counts on their land.

Jim Robinson gave a power point presentation that featured an update on the historic channel modification inventory. The original physical features inventory was combined with the Merrick topographic data sets to show channel and floodplain features in a way that is meaningful and understandable. The 1930s photography is now available but not complete for the entire river. Warren

added that he requested that Jim demonstrate the importance and value of the LiDAR product from Merrick through the slide show.

Warren Kellogg reported that he is getting geared up for the 2007 season of riparian fieldwork and has visited most of the conservation districts. Those that still need to be visited will be contacted soon. Warren also thanked Will Alexander for his part in giving a presentation in Red Lodge at a Regional Soil and Water Conservation Society meeting. Warren said Will did a great job of representing the Council.

The recommended 2007-2008 work plan was presented. See Warren's attached notes for a detailed breakdown. Greg Johnson commented that this was the work plan if the ACOE was awarded the 1.1 million for FFY 2007.

Liz Ching from Senator Baucus' office was on hand and supported Greg's statement that the ACOE would likely be awarded the 1.1 million for the Yellowstone River CES.

RAC Update: John Moorhouse reported on the recent RAC meeting. The RAC's recommendations were:

1. The Council should take the position that Russian olive trees be listed as a noxious weed in Yellowstone River riparian areas.
2. The Council should begin outreach to communities along the river to update people on the activities of the Council.
3. The Council should pursue the possibility of establishing a science center to house data, support research, provide outreach and assistance in river management, etc.
4. The Council should take immediate steps to secure the Upper River data either in the storage space available in Billings or in another suitable and accessible location. The RAC would also like to see current data be made available on the YRCDC website as PDF files.

No action was taken on the first item, see notes under the "Discussion" section of the minutes. Under the second item, Carol Watts offered to set up a public meeting in Miles City because the Mayor of Miles City had expressed interest. No action was taken at this time. Under item three Will Alexander commented on the proposed Yellowstone Center saying that he thought the draft proposal was not acceptable. He felt that the draft did not represent the goal of the Council in supporting unbiased information. Council members did not respond and no action was taken. Item four was discussed under the Coordinator's update.

John Moorhouse reported that Burt Williams has resigned from the RAC and is now a member of the TAC. He also recommended that Robert Lubbers fill that position. Robert Lubbers is very active in the Audubon Society and the Yellowstone River forum. Council members know him as he has attended many of their meetings over the years. As a Council member John Moorhouse moved that the rules requiring a RAC candidate to submit two letters of recommendation be suspended and the Council appoint him at that time. No second was called for because Will Alexander objected to the motion. Robert Lubbers offered to get the letters of recommendation and submit them to the Council for review as required by the Standing Rules. The motion died for lack of a second.

Business meeting: Treasurer's report was given by Carol Watts. The financial statement shows all the activity in the account since the last meeting and the grant statement shows where we are with the grants. Carol mentioned that the 30W-05-238 would expire soon and Nicole was in the process of getting a bid on a new display. Paul Gilbert made a motion to accept the financial reports, Bob Hector seconded and the motion carried by voice vote. The reports were filed for audit. Carol noted that the YRCDC had paid a \$100.00 contribution to the legislative dinner.

Minutes from the January 18, 2007 meeting and the February 8, 2007 tele-conference were approved with Will Alexander making the motion, Orvin Finsaas seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Term limits on the chair and vice chair were discussed to see if they could be extended to two years. Since this would be a bylaw change it was decided to leave things the way they are.

The next meeting will be May 17, 2007. If a meeting is needed in April it will be a tele-conference.

Updates:

Coordinator's Report: Nicole McClain, YRDCD Coordinator circulated a copy of the 223 grant, a recent article out of the Smithsonian magazine about the Pallid Sturgeon and her coordinator's report.

Since the last report Nicole has attended Stillwater, Park, and Sweet Grass CD meetings.

She updated the Council about the status of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant application for the Russian Olive/Salt Cedar pilot demonstration project. Nicole also brought along a copy of this application for review and stated that NFWF will make an announcement of the successful applicants by May 15.

The 223 grant for \$6,930 was ranked number one by the RCAC and will be used for the Yellowstone River Clean Up Project.

Nicole met with Park CD to discuss storage of the Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force archives. Liz Galli-Noble prepared a description of the Task Force files, currently in her possession, and provided a copy to Nicole and Gayleen Malone of Park CD. The Council directed Nicole to help arrange the return of the records to Park County CD, or to the Billings DNRC office, and offered to write a letter of support if needed in procuring the files.

Nicole went to Helena and testified on HB2 which was tabled. Now our budget increase request is under HB805. A suggestion was made that Senator Hansen might sponsor an amendment for an additional \$40,000.00 for the YRCDC, in which case Lane Larson will second. Don Youngbauer said it was important to continue to make contact with our legislators. Nicole and Laurie Zeller are working on the federal match figures for 2006.

Nicole said she was also working on updating her budget to show the changes that are reflected in Carol's financial reports.

The Coordinator informed the Council that PPL is accepting applications for spring grants until July 31, 2007. The grant has a \$10,000.00 limit, and Nicole asked the Council to consider applying for this funding. The grant would be used to purchase a computer and software, so material from the studies can be more readily accessed. Will Alexander made a motion to apply for the grant, Paul Gilbert seconded, and the motion carried.

The Coordinator reported an opportunity is coming up for free training sessions in riparian proper functioning condition (PFC) by the Montana/Dakota Riparian Training Cadre. Nicole will bring more information to the next meeting.

Nicole will be attending the "Get That Grant" workshop in Bozeman April 16-19 and in May she will attend the MWCC Awards Ceremony in Helena.

Nicole has planned her vacation for May 24 through June 4, 2007. Kelly's vacation and wedding is April 15 through 20, 2007.

Grant Review Committee: Chairman Don Youngbauer suggested that such a committee be formed to help decide which grants should be applied for, what the products are, etc. Along with Council members, Warren would like to involve RAC members and TAC members who would be suited to the projects. This was tabled until the next meeting.

Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee: Dave Schwarz reported that the first meeting of the planning group is this coming week in Omaha. The purpose of the meeting is to draft a charter for the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC). Dave will be participating in the process, and most of the travel expenses (except meals) will be paid by the MRRIC.

YR Forum Projects: No update was given.

Yellowstone River Clean Up: Bob Hector commented that the key to the success of acquiring the 223 grant was donations made by FWP Fisheries Division, the Audubon Society, and the Yellowstone River Forum. The plan now is to go to the conservation districts and ask for their input as to what they would like to see done in their area.

Bob explained that there will be four Montana Conservation Corp crews that can be committed for the five days of work, July 23 through 27. Yellowstone CD and Custer County CD have both pledged to sponsor days of work. Bob passed out a letter for Council members to take back information to their conservation districts for next years program.

Bob explained the process for registering our cleanup project with the national system. By registering with them our clean up would be posted and volunteers could be recruited. The national clean up has many good programs one of which is a disclaimer that we will adopt. They have fun activities and prizes; however their cleanup is scheduled in June. Because of the earlier date, any volunteers we might have would not be eligible for prizes. We are looking into the possibility of having our own prize program this year. Bob recommends that we do the national sign up, but we do not promote it. We will use their ideas and when they ask for comments we can request that the time for awarding prizes be extended.

Discussion:

Intake Discussion/Position: This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Russian Olive/Salt Cedar discussion: Kenny Nemitz stated that the Council should not encourage listing the Russian Olive as a noxious weed but instead should encourage districts to work with the local weed boards. Orvin Finsaas said that North Dakota decided to let the individual counties make the decision for their county. Don Youngbauer thought more discussion was warranted at a future meeting.

Other Discussion: Will Alexander commented on the proposed Yellowstone Center saying that he thought the draft proposal was not acceptable. He felt that the draft did not represent the goal of the Council in supporting unbiased information.

Public Comment: There was no public comment. The meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

Attachment

**Yellowstone River Technical Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes – 3/20-21/2007
Billings, MT**

Budget

The Army Corps of Engineers' (ACOE) 2007 budget appears to have 1.1million recently placed into it by the Montana Senator's for the Yellowstone River Cumulative Effects Study (CES).

WRDA legislation is still being drafted and slated for a vote sometime this year.

The President's proposed 2008 budget for the CES is 200K reflecting a general reduction for the ACOE General Investigation program.

Proposed 2007 Work Plan (ACOE Funds):

- Avian 96K 2nd field season
- ACOE Travel/Project Mgmt 80K
- Hydrology 60K Big Horn River (ACOE in-house)
- Hydraulics 60K? Stillwater/Dawson floodplain mapping (contracted out or ACOE in-house)
- Topography/Aerial Photos 324K LiDAR mapping for remaining counties
- Economics 50K Prototype for Stillwater County?
- Information Mgmt/GIS 30K
- Cumulative Effects 20K Fall Workshop/Training
- Riparian 30K Riparian GIS (contract out?)
- Fishery 165K 2 year study
- Bridge Survey 50K USGS below Big Horn River confluence
- Historic Information 20K
- Tribal 10K

- Topography Mapping (2005 RDG funds) 40K Radar mapping

Socioeconomic

Cultural Inventory: Susan Gilbertz provided an up-date on the Cultural Inventory report. She had received a few comments on the drafts so it was decided to extend the comment period to the end of March. The report will be final by the end of April. Susan has given presentations on the draft over the last couple months.

Distribution of the report:

- Post the report to the YRCDC web site.
- Send notices to interviewees with information on how to access the report. Susan will be sending them cards on how to access the report once it is final.
- Present this information to individual CD Boards this summer or CD Area Meeting next fall.
- Where hard copies are provided, include a cover letter with YRCDC letterhead.
- Need to come up with funds for printing the 6 "notebooks" (~ 130 page average per notebook) that make up the report. We are looking to the ACOE, State, and/or YRCDC office for funds.

Channel Dynamics

Geomorphology:

- Historical Channel Modification Inventory: Jim Robinson showed some results of the physical features mapping using 2004 high-resolution orthophotography. This is a further refinement of the NRCS and LiDAR mapping.
- GIS based inundation model (Work Order #2): DTM Consulting provided an up-date to the TAC. They are looking a various topo mapping data sets that have different levels of resolution to test their inundation model (approximate 100 year floodplain delineation). The YRCDC may want to extend the Work Order deadline until the IFSAR topo mapping is available later in the year. This will provide more detailed topo data currently not available. The three counties

(Stillwater, Yellowstone, and Dawson) that have LiDAR topographic mapping will be completed in the next couple months.

- Planform analysis (Work Order #3): DTM Consulting and Karen Boyd gave the TAC an up-date on WO#3 progress: 1) They have revised the flow line datasets to account for flow variability in the 1950, 1976-1977, 1995, and 2001 photography. 2) They have completed the digitized 1977 bank lines and flow lines extending from Intake to the Missouri River. 3) Park County bank lines have been incorporated into the datasets. 4) Developing planform metrics that will track channel geomorphic changes from 1950 to present day.
- Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) mapping: This work is just getting started. They will begin this mapping in the three counties that have the LiDAR topographic mapping.

GIS Services Contract Budget Status

Contract Amount = \$75,000; \$56,000 obligated; \$19,000 remaining

Work Order	Purpose	Amount	Source	Status
1	Prelim Planform	\$11,000	2003 RDG	Complete, Report submitted
2	Inundation Model	\$30,000	2005 RDG	90 % Complete
3	Additional Planform	\$15,000	2005 RDG	90 % Complete
<i>TOTAL SPENT</i>		\$56,000		

Topographic Mapping: Matt Cross (Intermap Technologies, Inc.) gave a presentation on IFSAR (radar) and LiDAR (laser) topographic mapping applications. There are some licensing restrictions on the IFSAR where the raw data cannot be readily distributed.

TAC recommendations on future topographic mapping are:

- Do not collect any additional bathymetry. There remains a question though on whether it's needed to meet FEMA floodplain mapping standards and its value for characterizing fish habitat.
- Collect both IFSAR and LiDAR topographic mapping for the remaining counties. The IFSAR will provide more timely data to allow for some of the geomorphic work to be completed. The LiDAR will provide more detailed data that does not carry any licensing restrictions, but will not be available until in 2008. It was also decided that there would be a benefit in having a comparison of both technologies for future applications.
- Purchase high resolution orthophotography for the remaining counties as part of the LiDAR topo mapping contract.

Hydrology: Greg Johnson handed out the initial draft hydrology analysis for the Yellowstone River corridor above the Big Horn River confluence.

Hydraulic: Kevin Adams (ACOE) gave a presentation on the hydraulic modeling that he has been working on. The draft floodplain maps for Yellowstone County will be submitted to FEMA, Yellowstone County, and DNRC by the end of March. There is not a definite schedule yet for Stillwater and Dawson Counties. The ACOE may do some sensitivity modeling with and without bathymetry to see if it makes much difference.

Biology

Avian: Danielle Jones provided an up-date on both the 2006 and the up-coming 2007 field work. In 2006, they visited 265 sites representing 4 different habitat types located on 65 private landowners and 15 public sites. They've recorded over 90 different species.

They plan to begin their 2007 field work in mid-May by revisiting the 2006 sites plus adding a few more.

* The plan is to make initial contacts with private landowners as early as mid-April and then contact them again prior to accessing their property.

Riparian:

- Government Land Survey Notes: Kelly Gilbertson and John Moorhouse looked into collecting GLO notes for the Yellowstone. Kelly provided examples to the TAC. Evidently, BLM is currently putting these survey notes on a web site, scheduled to be complete in 6 months. Kelly will inquire with BLM on how they are going about doing this and if there is anything the Council can do to expedite the process.
- Riparian GIS Mapping: Two prototype study reaches (A14 and D11) are having their riparian cover and land use digitized from three sets of photography (1950s, 1976, and 2001). DTM Consulting will be assessing the FRAGSTATS modeling program to determine its usefulness in looking at riparian connectivity and complexity. This work is being funded under a DNRC Watershed grant and is expected to be completed by early May.

Demonstration Projects

Pryor Creek Fish Passage: Brent Esplin (BOR) reviewed the alternatives outlined in a draft feasibility report for fish passage on two sites on Pryor Creek. Brent was asked to include more information/cost estimates on the inverted siphon option for the lower site. Final comments are due to Brent by the end of March so they can finalize the report.

Huntley Diversion Fish Passage: The existing fish passage by-pass needs some work to make it more functional, but access across private lands has been denied. A request will be made by the Yellowstone CD to the landowner to allow one-time access to fix the structure.

Russian Olive/Salt Cedar Demonstration: Notification on the NSWF grant application status will not be known until mid-May.

Yellowstone River Clean-Up: The YRCDC has scheduled the clean-up project for July 21-29. 53 fishing access sites plus other public sites are being targeted. Montana Job Corp crews and volunteers are being lined up. Project costs are estimated to be ~ 20K that will come from a number of public and private sources.

Information Management

Yellowstone River Science Center: Discussed the draft concept paper developed by the Council's Subcommittee that outlines a framework for a Yellowstone River Science Center. Mike Penfold led the discussion in behalf of the subcommittee.

The general outcome of this discussion was a recommendation to focus on the idea of establishing an information repository/clearinghouse. Additional time and discussion would be necessary before broadening a Center's role into something more than that.

310 Permit Web Application: Met with DTM Consulting who is doing the web application and database design. Given new technology that was not available when this project was started and the difficulties experienced using the ArcIMS-based web application, we are now suggesting that we take a different web application approach. We have asked DTM for a proposal to investigate on what appears to be a more user-friendly Goggle Earth web application.

Conservation Districts Information: In the last 3 months, Warren Kellogg has met with individual CD Boards represented on the YRCDC to review CES work completed in 2006 and to talk about the 2007 field work. Only three CDs remain to be visited: Park, Carbon, and McKenzie CDs. CDs will be making the initial contacts for the riparian field work that will be start in May.

MSU-Billings: Chancellor Sexton from MSU-Billings visited with the TAC regarding the Yellowstone River CES and the relationship between the YRCDC and MSU-Billings. He was encouraged to attend the YRCDC meeting on Thursday.

2005 Reclamation and Development Grant Budget Status

2005 RDG Budget Categories		
\$	10,000	Custer CD Administrator Wages/Benefits
\$	14,000	Grant Admin
\$	10,000	Cumulative Effects Analysis
\$	17,000	BMP Development
\$	36,000	Photo Scanning and Processing
\$	24,000	Photo Acquisition
\$	1,000	Supplies
\$	3,000	Communications
\$	2,000	Travel
\$	183,000	Geomorph Analysis
\$	300,000	TOTAL
SPENT:		
\$	30,000	Inundation Modeling (WO #2)
\$	15,000	Additional Planform Analysis (WO #3)
\$	43,000	CMZ Map (Contract #16)
\$	1,800	MDT 1977 orthophoto production (below Glendive)
\$	89,800	TOTAL OBLIGATED TO DATE